The Summer Blooms

An Arcventure by momatoes

https://arc-rpg.com

Ready to Slay
Compatible with ARC

The Story in Summary

Once every three years, on three magical days, all the plants of the kingdom make a trek to the capital of **Gladden** to rejoice, celebrate, mingle and bloom in a joyous event: the **Summer Gala**.

The **Summer Prince**, heir to the glorious **Sun King** himself, graciously hosts the plant guests in his castle. With the help of his faithful butler **Gorty**, the Prince's traditional duty is to ensure the festivities are unbroken and that the **Lady of the Glen**, the Eternal Keeper of the Woods, is comfortable and appreciated.

And more reason to celebrate: the young Summer Prince himself turns 27 on the third day—a most auspicious age. And yet, the mayor is nearly out of his wits with worry, for **a strange situation has coincided with the festivities.**

For you see, **the children have stopped laughing;** they are physically well, but their wonder and joy seem to vanish. This has never happened before.

And while the Summer Prince has always lent an open ear and aid in the past, he's been strangely distant—in fact, any appointments that the mayor tries to make is rebuffed by Georty!

"He is too busy with the Gala."

How bizarre and unlike him! Something is afoot. Is he unwell? **The mayor asks you for help to seek and beseech the Prince on his behalf...though you'll need to sneak into the castle and Gala to do that.** Easy, right?

This Adventure

The Summer Blooms is a 4-hour adventure by momatoes, based on a custom story for a prior Actual Play video. Changes happen here and there.

It is ideal for starting heroes, set in a slightly whimsical world akin to fairy tales where plants can talk, animals have jobs, and anyone can be both wicked and kind. It is entirely likely to complete the adventure without triggering a physical fight.

However, this adventure has somber themes as well; particularly: well-intentioned yet cruel creatures, doomed love, and powerlessness in the burden of duty. There are also bees.

These ambiguous elements make this story ideal for ages 15 and above, though anyone can easily customize this adventure to suit their party's story needs.

If you are running this adventure as a Guide, make sure to check with your players if they are OK with stories like the original fairy tales; where whimsy and light-heartedness coexist with darker themes.

The Story in Full

The truth is more dire. For you see, the glorious lineage of the throne has been unbroken for millenia for a simple reason: **at the right time, the heir becomes a vessel for the Sun King's soul—they Ascend into the Sun King himself.** Now, the Summer Prince lies sweating, burning in his bed as the ascendancy begins to take hold.

The Lady of the Glen won't have it. Years ago, she fell in love with the Prince, and now considers him the home of her inscrutable heart. **She's set in motion a plan to create a Ritual Flower that can sever the Prince's tie to his father's soul.** To power its magic, however, she has commanded her plants **to siphon off the energy and vibrancy of Gladden,** and the children suffer for it.

Gorty is aiding her. In his heart, he knows what they're doing is wrong; but as sees his son figure lie feverish and unresponsive on the bed, and as his old heart remembers the young boy who grew up so kind, perhaps this will be worth it.

Will it be? When the Doomsday Clock is over, the Doom comes to pass: the Flower blooms, the Prince is whole again, but no child will ever laugh again.

OMENS

1. The Ritual Flower continues to grow, rooted directly over the Prince's heart.
2. The only plant who knows and is against this scheme—Ronpepper—is held in the Dungeon of Bees.
3. Gorty is cooperating with the Lady and preventing any of the knights or staff know about the plan.

A Flow

Dramatis Personae [Page 22]

Township Hall [Page 9]

Castle Exterior [Page 9]

Foyer [Page 10]

One or more of these may be tackled in any order.

- Hall of Splendor [Page 11]
- Drawing Room [Page 12]
- Very Smoky Pantry [Page 13]

The Dungeon of Bees [Page 14]

The Solar [Page 18]

THE MAYOR SEEKS HELP

THE VENUS FLY TRAP ARE NOT PLEASED

THE GUEST LIST IS DULY FOLLOWED

FOR A GALA, IT IS ODDLY EMPTY. THE HEROES JUST MAY...

- Be caught by guards
- Meet brave mouse Barnaby
- Wade through smoke

RESCUING RONPEPPER FROM THE BEES

THE LADY, THE BUTLER, AND THE PRINCE AWAIT

Locations

Township Hall

Its humble decor is nearly obscured by papers and books and stamps. A table with seventeen drawers dominates the room and almost obscures the mayor sitting behind it. Cat clerks file in and out to dump even more paperwork.

The mayor, a halfling barely taller than the desk, looks harangued. They give the heroes all the info they need.

- "Gorty is more sour than usual, truly don't know why. He has always been strict, very protective of the Prince he is."
- "They might not let you in if you tell them I sent you. But uh, that's why I hired you. You're experts? Yes?"
- "A few plant guests are still coming in, though most arrived the first day. You might be able to blend in. Er, you don't look like plants? Well that's uh, an issue."
- "The castle has rooms. And nooks. And a dungeon or two. Oh, and roaming guards but they're friendly if a bit bored. Amelie is their new captain so...maybe avoid her."
- "Compensation, of course, a month's food or hospitality at an inn of your choice. It's good yes?"

Cat clerks say:

- "Meow" (we're busy)

Castle Exterior

The castle looks perpetually sunwarm even at night. A deep moat surrounds the steep walls with a drawbridge to the entrance. A small line of disgruntled plants—ferns, flowers and a coterie of venus fly traps—await outside; there's a commotion in the gatehouse, and grumbles of discontent are in the air.

The gatekeeper isn't quite sure if the venus fly traps are plants or animals, and the fly traps are quite offended. The knight beside her is a moth, and is understandably terrified.

The gatekeeper is a little dim but well-intentioned. A farfetched enough explanation can also convince her that the heroes are plants, too.

- "How can you be a plant if you eat creatures? Can you explain it slower for me? We're only letting plants in, you see."

The moth knight beside her is less likely to fall for that trick. He will be grateful if the venus fly traps could be escorted away.

- "They will eat me! Do NOT let them near, they WILL eat me!"

The fly traps are snapping their heads angrily. If the heroes help them in, they can vouch for them in the next room, the foyer.

- "Moths taste rubbish anyway. This is ridiculous!"

Foyer

A lushly decorated room with antique lounge furnishings and vaulted ceilings. Aside from the exit, there a large ornate door leading to the Hall of Splendors. Two knights stand on either side, while a third to the side is eyeing all guests in case of trouble.

The hall guards may be overheard chatting about a mouse that keeps trying to apply for the royal knights.

If the third knight spots them, she will ask the heroes about their purpose of visit. Depending on the response, the knight may escort them, call for Captain Amelie, or let them be.

- Mention Gorty or the mayor: escort to the Drawing Room.
- Lie about helping with Gala, castle repairs, or being maintenance personnel: escorted to Smoky Pantry
- Get vouched for by fly traps: allowed to the Hall.

A cocklebur plant is on a couch, muttering about weed. He's not sympathetic to humans, though may be convinced to do very lazy favors if the heroes cure his indigestion.

- "They think I'm weed. Weed! So they give me this terrible soil to root in, this high-energy thing the Lady started feeding everyone and...no, I don't want to talk."

Raise any trouble, flub a lie, or spend too long: Amelie arrives. She will attempt to bring the heroes in the Drawing Room and await Gorty's decision.

Hall of Splendor

Almost obscenely regal. The domed ceiling is painted to look like the sky, with golden clouds. A large, orblike chandelier simulates a glowing sun.

Heavy curtains filter the light from the magnificent windows. A few marble tables and ornate chairs are tastefully placed, but most of the floor is empty...and only a few plant guests can be seen here and there. Where's everyone?

Three straggler groups remain in the hall.

1. A group of gossipy wisterias who criticize the heroes' fashion sense. They fawn over the Lady of the Glen and are glad she finally has a friend, though they refuse to elaborate.

2. A prairie dog engineer. She mentions that Noblin burrows are getting close and causing some debris in the Dungeon of Bees, and she's worried after hearing someone is staying there tonight. A nearby shrub asks if the prisoner is Ronpepper—a chili that always seems to know everything and everyone, but has a troublemaking streak. The prairie isn't sure. "The old side entrance to the Dungeon was in the pantry, but I heard they made a new one..somewhere."

3. A bored guard, Jerome. He's willing to describe places and directions in the castle and doesn't particularly care who the heroes are—though after the conversation, he'll casually say "Righto, so I'll go right ahead and tell captain about you. No hard feelings" and move towards the corridor.

4.

Exits – (1) A recessed servants' door leading to the Smoky Pantry. A note says "Keep out! Smoking ongoing." and (2) a stately corridor towards the Drawing Room. Amelie and two knights are patrolling the corridor by default and will apprehend the heroes.

Drawing Room

The room contains a grand bookshelf, a central table with three chairs, and a couch. Sunlight streams from a round window placed on the ceiling. There is a plate of cheeses (a cursory examination reveals small mouse bites) on the table.

Portraits of the Sun King—a cruel-looking man—contrast with the Prince's own gentle pictures. A plaque under the Sun King's portrait reads "Glory lights the way." A halo on one of the portraits seems bereft of paint. If sunlight is directed towards the halo, it will unlock the bookshelf—actually a secret door—with a click.

A notable book in the shelf is "Sun Kings Everlasting" about royal lineages. The family tree is a straight line—any non-heir either dies before having a family, or only one son is born—and all portraits look oddly identical in their cruel expression. Studying the birth and coronation year reveals that the Sun Kings all come to power at 27 years old.

If the heroes are ever caught, they are brought here. Amelie sends for Gorty and herself sets guard inside the room to prevent any funny business.

- "Please, we're doing our best to maintain order and peace. If Gorty says it can wait, then wait. Respect the castle's decisions please."

The heroes may attempt to subdue her, or tell her about their mission.

- "But, what Gorty says… the children? Well, I've noticed it too. You were sent for that? That's strange. I'll find Gorty myself—stay here." [she leaves and assigns someone to stand guard…outside the room]

Heroes may also be escorted here directly from the foyer. A different knight will stand outside the door.

After a short while, the heroes hear squeaking sounds if they are quiet enough—a mouse crying "Let me out! I'm behind the bookshelf!"

- "I'm Ser Knight Barnaby, a most honorable mouse! Please help, I am on a valiant mission to save my friend! They have detained my good chum Ronpepper after they spoke out against the Lady!"

If the bookshelf door is opened, Barnaby leads them through the corridor within towards the Dungeon of Bees, where she'd been heading to save her friend before forced to turn back.

- "My tiny paws could not reach the door handle on the end of the corridor, so I am thankful for your nice height, and nicer compassion. I hope you can assist me, brave heroes. If that's okay, let's adventure together!

If **30 real-time minutes** pass or an altercation occurs and other guards alerted, Gorty will arrive and order the heroes be cuffed and brought to the Dungeon.

A Smoky Pantry

It's almost impossible to see inside due to the dense fog of smoke permeating everything. The smoke is harmless and smells pleasant.

Hidden by the smoke, an open doorway (the old doors hanging limply against the broken hinge) leads towards the Dungeon of Bees. Another sign on this doorway says "Danger! Bees!"

The pantry is stuffy and hot. It's quite tidy—the staff had cleared out everything except a few sacks on the floor—yet huge, its sides and a central aisle dominated by large counters and cabinets.

The smoke, of course, has been placed there so the bees would not escape from the broken doorway. It emanates from the spout of a **Vaporous Teapot** placed atop a central counter.

Heroes listening closely may hear a soft hiss of steam; they may draw on **Academic or Culture** to recall that Vaporous Teapots are popular for adding "ambience" to stage plays; or **Trade or Tinker** to realize that it stops working if it gets cold.

A ledger lies next to the teapot, with notes.

- "No food or drinks to be sent to royal bedchamber for three days, but prepare Sun King's favorite meal on fourth day—extra large servings!!—for prince."
- "Lady of Glen requested for extra nourishment for plant guests. Never seen this much before. Gorty to cart them off himself. Says plant guests not to be disturbed."
- "Teapot acting weird since Gala started. I think something's in the air that's making it react stronger than expected. Housekeep says it's pollen?"

Dungeon of Bees

Everything (except the floor) turns into buzzing bees if touched. Walls? Bees. Debris? Bees. A half-eaten sandwich on the floor? Also bees.

Luckily, with everything being bees, it's easy to push through any cell barriers—but they sting for **3 Blood** before reconstituting. They are cognizant and actually friendly, they just only understand bee. An **Artistry** check to imitate the bee's body movement-based language can work.

Bees become placid and harmless with smoke, music or flowers. They are agitated by loud noises. A **Trade or Academic** Skill Check will also reveal this.

The next page shows a map with Ronpepper's location.

- "Well I'm only trapped here because the Lady likes the Prince. And I mean, like **like**. She's been holed up in his room for the past three days, oh I *know*, it's so scandalous right? She asked us all to start puffing out this pollen that sucked in surrounding energy. I said, no way! Anyway the Lady got mad and...how are we getting out?

  Oh yeah, I can lead you to where the prince is, even his room. I've snuck there in the past galas and slept on the bed because it's comfy. Oh it's the mouse! Barnacle or something. I missed you old buddy! Did you find the cheeses?"

Smoky Pantry

If the heroes never met Barnaby in the Drawing Room, they will find her here, trying to tame a bee.

"Just a language gap," she says earnestly.

If the heroes are captured by Gorty, they will be brought to this cell. Otherwise empty,

Ronpepper will call out for the heroes. Unfortunately, noise agitates bees.

Fake walls. Actually bees.

Drawing Room

A cheese sandwich. Barnaby is tempted to eat it. Bees.

Debris on the ground, occupies half the floor. Actually bees.

Fresh debris on the ground, occupies the entire width of the corridor; waist-high. Also bees.

A hive. If any bee had been harmed or if the heroes swat or touch the hive, they will violently chase the heroes. Barnaby pipes up and warns the party about this.

Heroes will need to walk through carefully—and then they're safe. If the bees *do* give chase, the sheer number will make it an overwhelming fight. Barnaby will try to stay behind to save everyone.

Racks of weaponry and armor. Bees.

Unknown Exit

After the Dungeon

Exiting the Dungeon brings the party to an unremarkable corridor. Ronpepper will point out the route to the Solar where the Prince's office and bedchamber is connected. They'll insist on parting ways—their chili body can't stomach danger.

If the heroes haven't asked them yet, Ronpepper is more than happy to spill the beans.

- "Well, as I've said, the Lady is head over heels in love for the Prince. Never saw her smile, ever, unless it's by his side. And her heart is ice ***cold*** usually."
- "She starts telling the plants to puff out these pollen...I know what they do, they suck in energy, joy, delight. That sort of thing. Kids are very vulnerable. Honestly I think it's because their lungs are terrible. Why do you humanoids have lungs anyway?"
- "Says it's for an important thing. I don't know, a birthday gift? It's the Prince's birthday today right? Weird his dad never came to the castle to celebrate. Actually, weird the Prince never went out to celebrate either. Never saw him the whole time I was here. But maybe that's because the Lady's holed up with him. She's by his side ***for sure***."
- "Yes, it's over there. Take a left, the door's over there. No, I'm not going with you. She'll kill me! Well, she'll kill ***you***, too, but maybe you folks are up to it. I don't know. Do you have life insurance?"

Ser Knight Barnaby is easily persuaded to accompany the heroes if needed. Just as Ronpepper said, after a left turn, a large door can be found—leading to the final area.

Solar

The Solar is a small living room with an open doorway leading to the bedchamber beside it. As heroes enter, they see that much of the left wall is taken by several terrariums painstakingly maintained. There is a handsome desk near the back, with a leatherbound notebook on its surface.

The open doorway to the bedchamber is to its right, and heroes can hear a tense conversation between an old man—Gorty—and an ethereal woman—the Lady of the Glen.

The notebook contains a dated journal. The last three entries read (in order):

- 1st entry
  "Lady is arriving in two days. The Gala again. My last. She is upset—I know her well enough—but I have done my best to explain."
- 2nd entry
  "Tomorrow night it begins. Gorty, I'm so scared. But I have to do it."
- Last entry
  "At least I'll see her one last time. I know ascending won't hurt—and that the memories will stay—but I want one last time to feel. And I'll be glad to save that final feeling wholeheartedly for her."

The argument seems to be very heated.

- Gorty: You said once it blooms, the pollen will be gone! And that people can be back to normal!
- Lady: I said the pollen will disappear. I never said the reclaimed energy will return.
- Gorty: What do you mean? The capital will stay like this?!
- Lady: And you will be thankful. The Prince will return, freed of his curse to become his father. As I have proclaimed. Now silence! The flower will bloom soon.

Bedchamber

The Prince lies in bed, a flower growing from his chest. The Lady of the Glen stands vigil over him, while Gorty looks diminutive beside her.

Gorty will attempt to shout for the guards to arrive. Unless he's subdued immediately, Amelie and a knight will arrive in **10 real-time minutes.** Gorty or Amelie may be persuaded, however, to attack the Lady instead with a successful **[TN-1] Charisma, Impose or Insight** (or flat TN, if an extremely compelling argument is made).

The Lady has no appetite to fight unless the heroes physically threaten the flower. Removing the flower will stop the ritual—but it will mean the Prince successfully ascends and becomes the cruel Sun King.

Talking the Lady down will require **[TN-3] Charisma** with a plausible argument. However, for each success on the following list, the **TN** will improve by **1**.

- **Insight or Artistry** to articulate an understanding of her deep longing and grief
- **Academic or Trade** to realize that the exertion will kill many, if not most, plants under the Lady's stewardship

If the Lady is convinced, her heart breaks—but she understands, and destroys the flower herself.

However, if the situation escalates or the Lady is convinced the heroes are a threat, **Conflict** ensues.
A shattering sound rings out as two **Small Saplings** emerge from the terrarium in the Solar and join her.

The only way to prevent the Prince from ascending into the Sun King is to allow the flower to bloom.

BOUND BY DUTY, BOUND BY LOVE

Dramatis Personae

LADY OF THE GLEN

The Lady is the eternal steward of the woods. Near-inhuman and inscrutable, yet possessing of both depthless loneliness and depthless love.

Origins The heart of the woods.
Looks & Traits Wherever she goes, the smell of rain and foliage follow. Taller than the biggest knight, she is graceful though appears reserved; cold.
Relations Will die for her woods. Will kill for the Prince.
Role & Motive Wishes to prevent his ascendance.
Modus Better protected when surrounded by plants; taps into Arcana.

Blood 15 ◦ Guts 18
Creative 2 ◦ Careful 3 ◦ Concerted 3
Survival 3 ◦ Insight 3 ◦ Artistry 2 ◦ Physique 2

Inventory
- Longing [+1 Psychosocial Defense]

Special
- One instance each of Netherwave and Manic Hands, though as plant-themed Spells.

SMALL SAPLINGS

Blood 7 ◦ Guts 6
Creative 0 ◦ Careful 1 ◦ Concerted 1
Survival 2 ◦ Physique 1

Special
- Weird bark [+1 Blood Defense]
- May use an action to heal the Lady for 1 Blood and 1 Guts (as Spell)

GORTY (HE/HIM)

Aged master castlekeep and the Prince's butler since he was young.

Origins	A faraway village.
Looks & Traits	Crabby but caring.
Relations	Considers the Prince a son.
Role & Motive	Keeping the Prince safe and happy, including from the Sun King himself.
Modus	Invisibly efficient.

Blood 5 ◦ Guts 7
Creative 0 ◦ Careful 2 ◦ Concerted 1
Impose 3 ◦ Charisma 2 ◦ Trade 2

Piercing voice [Guts Damage +1]
Prim and proper [Guts Defense +2]

AMELIE (SHE/HER)

Captain of the Royal Guards.

Origins	Gladden, the Summer Capital.
Looks & Traits	Idealistic; believes in the process and the powers that be.
Relations	Constantly exasperated at some of the lackadaisal guards.
Role & Motive	Maintaining her ideals of peace and greater good.
Modus	Tactical planning, advantage stacking.

Blood 10 ◦ Guts 7

Creative 2	Tactics 2	Good sword [Blood Damage +2]
Careful 2	Weaponry 2	Well-tailored armor [Blood Defense +2]
Concerted 2	Observe 2	One instance of Deadly Focus

Ordinary Knights

Blood 8 ◦ Guts 6
Creative 1 ◦ Careful 1 ◦ Concerted 2
Weaponry 2 ◦ Physique 2

Sword [Blood Damage +1] and Armor [Blood Defense +1]

SER KNIGHT BARNABY (SHE/HER)

A tiny hero with a big heart.

Origins	Humble mousiness.
Looks & Traits	Virtuous though shy.
Relations	Considers Ronpepper her best friend.
Role & Motive	Rescuing Ronpepper!
Modus	Dexterous heroics.

If Ser Knight Barnaby joins in a Conflict, you may share this to a player so they control Barnaby during the fight.

Blood 8 ◦ Guts 6
Creative 2 ◦ Careful 2 ◦ Concerted 1
Coordination 3 ◦ Focus 2 ◦ Weaponry 1 ◦ Culture 1

Teeny sword [Blood Damage +1]
Courageous heart [Guts Defense +2]

1 instance of Heartpiercer
1 of Inspiration

RONPEPPER (THEY/THEM)

As spicy as they come.

Origins	The pepper family.
Looks & Traits	A literal plant. Gossipy.
Relations	Judges others.
Role & Motive	Knows the “situation”.
Modus	He *really* likes talking.

Blood 6 ◦ Guts 4
Creative 2 ◦ Careful 0 ◦ Concerted 1
Survival 2 ◦ Insight 2

Special
On skin contact, causes 1 Blood damage due to extreme pepperiness.

This adventure did not go through an editing pass. Please forgive all typos—and no need to contact the author about them. Though other concerns are welcome in her inbox or her Discord server.

Except for stock images for the branches and flowers, all images were made from public domain art—including collages and manipulations of paintings by Monet, Ingres, Cezanne and Klimt. All fonts are Google Fonts: Cormorant Garamond, Josefin Sans, Astloch and Cinzel Decorative.

This link will make a copy of the original document.
https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1BWB80ElS9ji1lD7HDIbgvDs3ft2_lKmzgPIlAtgOZAk/copy

BY MOMATOES FOR ARC: DOOM
https://arc-rpg.com